



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0758WA-1 for Vancouver Public Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The consortium lays out a clear, ambitious vision for their schools that includes details of how the personalized learning environment will build on the four core educational assurance areas already in place. The format of the application makes it easy to follow and identify the authors' salient points. The table of strategic directives and deliverables clearly lays out the vision for the grant. The applicant lays out the baseline for reform by showing the status of each LEA with respect to each of the four core educational assurance areas adding credibility to the vision presented.</p> <p>While there is a mention of closing the achievement gap, including more detail about increasing achievement and closing the achievement gap would have made clear that the reliance on personalized learning tools and environment is a means to an end rather than an end in itself. This point is reflected in the logic model.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>In the narrative for (A)(1) the application includes a description of the unique characteristics of each LEA in the collaborative that distinguishes them from their peers. The wide variety of both LEAs and schools, geographically and demographically, make this application a good model for many types of districts across the US. Each of the districts has shown significant buy-in and has a strong commitment to the consortium as evidenced by the numerous letters of support provided in the application.</p> <p>Participating schools in each of the LEAs are listed on the table in (A)(2) totaling 27,536 students from 7 LEAs. The reasoning for the selection of each of the particular schools in each district is less clear. There are five schools listed in the participating schools that do not meet the 40% threshold for low-income students; however, since the total consortium has greater than 40% of its students from low-income families the application meets this criteria. Likewise, approximately 25% of participating students are high need. Students from all grade levels are participating in this grant program. It is unclear why the specific schools chosen (within the district) were identified; the application does mention that the Superintendents gathered and looked at district-level data. There is not specific information as to what the criteria for selection was and there is significant variation across districts of low-income and high need populations. For example, most districts in the application have at least 60% of students from low income families, but the schools in MGSD have as few as 22% of their students from low-income families.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application provides significant evidence of planning for scaling up of reforms to additional members of the Digital Promise League. Following the initial program in the seven RTT-D LEAs, the application notes that seven additional LEAs will begin participating in each of the next three years until all members of the League are participating. The plan includes clear goals, timelines of when actions will occur and the expected outcomes. The cohorts of "learning districts" working with each of the participating districts coupled with the online communication tools and established periodic in-person convenings are good ways to share the lessons learned with other districts.</p> <p>The logic model implied in the project design graphic clearly lays out the theory of change -- that these particular schools, given these resources using personalized learning environments, with data system enhancements and consortium-wide professional development informed by League research projects will result in positive outcomes for students including</p>		

increased achievement and closing of achievement gaps.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)

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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Largely, the goals proposed by the consortium are both achievable and ambitious. Strengths include cutting the proficiency gap by half which will adjust for different rates of progress for schools and LEAs that have more work to do to meet the stated goal. Each of the required goals, including those for summative assessments, decreasing achievement gaps, graduation rates, and college enrollment rates are included.

There remain some instances of very low baseline proficiency rates that will require a faster growth rate to reach an ambitious goal. This is especially notable for the AMAOs for LEP students in Alabama. Piedmont City Schools in Alabama does not have goals broken out by ethnicity subgroup and so it is difficult to tell if these lower goals extend to the participating district. Similarly, for LEAs with large baseline achievement gaps, the narrowing of the gap will need to happen at a faster rate to reach an ambitious goal at the end of the grant. For example, the post-grant goal for American Indians in Utica Community Schools remains at 26.6%. There are also several other examples of this phenomenon with special education students and LEP students.

The post grant goal of 56.0% college going rates is too low for JDSD2 given the projected graduation rate of 94.5%.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	14
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The LEAs in the consortium provided data to show a record of success in closing achievement gaps. For example, Utica Community Schools had a reduction of the achievement gap between African American students and all students of almost 8% over the course of four years.</p> <p>Vancouver Public Schools is the only LEA with schools on the persistently low-achieving list. They demonstrate a clear record of success by implementing an "opportunity zone"; the participating schools showed significant improvement and were removed from the persistently low achieving list. The other LEAs have no data on which to judge this item.</p> <p>The LEAs in the consortium all have some data management systems that give educators access to data. There are different levels of access of performance data for students and families. The application states that the consortium will work to make sure each LEA has a system that makes performance data available to students and parents.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	3
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The Applicant reports that all LEAs in the consortium report annual operating budgets and / or financial reports; however, only one of the seven (VPS) currently makes building data publicly available on their website at this point. The Applicant states that all districts in the consortium will comply if awarded the grant. This is the expectation; however, no timeline or plan for making the information publicly available is provided in the application.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	9
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Based on the evidence provided, the extent to which the LEAs in the consortium have the sufficient autonomy under State requirements to implement the personalized learning environments varies depending on which of the seven states one reviews. In at least one case -- UCS in Michigan -- waivers have been requested and granted to support a more flexible approach to learning. HCS has also applied for and received waivers in South Carolina for seat time and foreign language requirements. Class size waivers have been issued in Texas to support a different approach to larger classes in MISD. In Alabama, allowances have been made to textbook requirements to accommodate electronic text books.</p>		

This record of successfully seeking waivers is indicative of breaking down barriers to flexibility that might otherwise slow progress. It may be difficult to navigate the laws of seven individual states; however, the wide variety of support from significant groups of stakeholders is a positive sign for flexibility.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)

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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The consortium provided examples of different ways in which each of the seven LEAs solicited feedback from external advisors, district leaders, educators (including teachers and principals), students and families. Horry County Schools provided an agenda of a "Superintendent's Advisory Cabinet for Parents" and community announcement.

The Consortium has provided a plethora of letters of support including ones from other members of the Digital Promise League that are not participating LEAs. Mayors, legislators, community groups, representatives of higher education and members of the business community all wrote to signify their support of the grant application. Governors, State Superintendents, teachers' unions, individual teachers and parents also provided letters of support.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)

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(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The Applicant provided a summary of the initiatives underway and the areas of need for each LEA. It is noted that while each of the LEAs does have ongoing initiatives, each still has gaps to address. The application outlines what would be done at the elementary, middle and high school level to address the gaps and how professional development would be executed to prepare teachers for a blended learning environment.

While some gap analysis has been done; for example finding a need for consolidation of information across systems, actually creating plans for students, and linking to preschool and higher ed systems; the applicant indicates that additional analysis will be done if the grant is awarded. The application notes that the consortium will take several steps, including taking a comprehensive survey of professional development needs in each LEA, in the first six months of the plan to provide additional analysis to complement the initial gap analysis.

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	20
(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The consortium cites personalized and blended learning environments as a way to increase students' investment and engagement in their education. Teacher quotes have been provided as testimony to this theory. At each level of schooling (elementary, middle, and high school) there are increasing levels of flexibility for students. Project-based learning at the middle school level is noted in JSD2's middle schools. Personalized learning plans and personalized support plans, where needed, will be developed to support this effort. Students will set goals with the help of their teachers and progress will be monitored by the use of the Northwest Evaluation Association's MAP tests at least twice a year. As new assessments become available, the consortium will re-assess the options. Dashboards will be used to track student progress toward goals.</p> <p>Project-based learning and cross-district projects will allow for exposure to different cultures, contexts and perspectives. Mastery based learning and assessment piloted in some districts will allow others to learn from their experiences. The blended learning models outlined allow for flexibility so that students can learn in a way that best fits their needs. The mechanisms planned for the consortium paint a picture of a comprehensive plan for students to learn and for teachers to track their progress in a way that allows for intervention and re-teaching to ensure mastery. By using electronic devices and dashboards to track learning, parents can also see the progress of their students. Student led conferences, already in place at HCS, for the participating districts is a innovative way to engage students in the big picture of their learning.</p>		
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	18
(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The Applicant recognizes their need to create a cadre of teachers and leaders that are highly effective in a personalized and blended learning environment. They are proposing to increase capacity of existing teachers and to develop tools to inform and support a more current understanding of teacher effectiveness in this environment. Learning for specific teachers will be</p>		

personalized to fit his or her needs. PD on the use of data and common practices will be implemented across the Consortium. A Principals' Academy will be created to support principals' work to create effective personalized learning environments.

All of the LEAs with the exception of VPS, use student achievement data in their evaluations. In VPS, use of student achievement data is optional. All participating LEAs do use student performance data as a part of principals' evaluations. Superintendents' evaluations are varied across the districts.

School leaders and teachers will all receive specific professional development to support teaching in a personalized and blended learning environment. Principal training across participating schools will be in a "principal academy" to create a professional learning community across districts and support collaborative learning. The consortium is working with at least two research partnerships to promote continuous learning from the outcomes at each of the districts in an effort to increase the number of students served by highly effective teachers. It is unclear how this will result in highly effective teachers serving more students.

This approach to professional development and evaluation is a compelling attempt to improve students' opportunities to become college- and career- ready through improving teaching.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	13
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Each of the LEAs has a seat on the governing board of the Consortium with VPS acting as the lead agency. A third party fiscal agent will be hired to manage the fiscal components of the RTT grant, if awarded. Working groups, a program manager and other support staff will manage the grant from the Digital Promise League. District staff will support the project from each LEA. While this set-up will maximize sharing of information across systems, it will be difficult to manage information flow and attention to the grant given the districts' limited capacity.</p> <p>The applicant states that school leadership teams will be active participants in the work and receive training (principals' academy) to support their work.</p> <p>Each district has committed to providing sufficient autonomy and flexibility to the participating schools to promote success of the personalized learning environments. The applicant states that the Consortium is committed to flexibility for students to show mastery and cites the examples of VPS providing credits through demonstration of competency rather than seat-time requirements for students and HCS exploring credit for foreign language mastery. Other than these examples, no strategy or policy changes are included for this effort.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	8
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application states that the LEAs have been working to build sufficient digital infrastructure to support academic achievement. The information provided does demonstrate how educators will access the data. The application notes that each district will provide resources to ensure that all participating students have a computer and internet connection in their homes. This is a difficult challenge. PCS, MISD, and MGSD are noted as districts that are providing laptops to students now.</p> <p>The application notes that technical support for learning tools is provided to teach people how to use them. It is less clear how technical support will be provided if there are questions after the initial training. Data will be available to parents for export and the consortium is providing standards for each LEA to follow on this issue. The interoperability of existing systems is not clear from the application and will be difficult across seven states and districts. Again, the consortium is providing guidance in this area in order to meet the standard. The Consortium members using the Digital learning platform will benefit from having a consistent platform from which they can compare data, determine best practices, and identify schools that should be used as models.</p>		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

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	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	15
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The cyclical approach laid out in the application relies on continuous improvement. The working group dedicated to continuous improvement will be essential in the effort to move from the continuous improvement cycle at the districts to the consortium as a whole. Stakeholder involvement and clear goals against which to measure growth improve the likely success of this project. Public sharing of the data will also increase the success of the effort to identify areas for improvement and make changes to advance the goals. The support of research partners mentioned earlier in the grant are also likely to increase the success of a continuous improvement process.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Meetings and demonstrations of blended learning technology are also noted in the application as ways in which communication with stakeholders has already begun and will continue throughout the grant. The roles of stakeholders in the continuous improvement process are identified in (E)(1) and a list of methods of communications has been provided. The varied methods of communication and outreach increase the odds of getting a cross-section of stakeholders, including parents and families to engage in the process. Communications developed at both the consortium level and district level will be provided to stakeholders with the help of communications consultants.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The Consortium lays out performance measures and the data that will be used to evaluate each measure. In addition to the required measures, additional measures are provided for each of the grade levels that track nonacademic indicators of success including the following: "In each Consortium district, the proportion of participating students in grades K–3, by grade and by subgroup (as defined above), who demonstrate an improvement in their level of mastery on a set of noncognitive indicators of learning (e.g., motivation, engagement, goal setting, self-confidence, discipline), as measured by the Digital Promise League of Innovative Schools RTT-D Gallup Student Poll for Grades K–3, will be at least 50% by spring 2014, 60% by spring 2015, and 75% by spring 2016, compared with baseline data that will be collected in spring 2013."</p> <p>The use of student surveys to measure socio-emotional learning and health of students is complementary to the existing measures on student achievement. A rationale for each measure provides context explains the purpose and potential questions to be addressed for each performance measure.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The Consortium has identified a number of ways in which they will measure effectiveness including the working group on continuous improvement, the external evaluation consultants, and the collection of data at the LEA and consortium level. Clear owners of each item are identified and a timeline for each is outlined in the application. The application specifically calls out an inclusion of a cost benefit analysis to determine the impact of investments.</p>		

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	9
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The budget the consortium has laid out for the project calls for \$40m to support the project and draws heavily from from other philanthropic sources of funds raised by the League as well. It relies heavily on contractors to provide services for each of the participating schools.</p> <p>Each project provides a clear description of the uses of funds and has reasonable cost estimates. The number of projects and the ways in which expenditures are characterized (consortium level, district level, district discretionary) is somewhat confusing; however, it seems that the school level expenditures are contained in the elementary, middle and high school projects and the</p>		

other four projects provide supporting supplemental resources to make the first three projects successful.

Estimates for costs are within reasonable market ranges. The individual project budgets provide a detailed level of expenditures for each school district.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)

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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The degree of philanthropic and local support for this project, as well as the additional funds provided to support the effort, indicates a strong possibility of sustainability for the immediate term. However, there are questions about how additional hardware costs will be funded in the longer term.

The sustainability of the ideas and the model proposed by the Digital Promise League shows great possibility for the continuation of the work. Having the League as a driving force behind the work in the seven RTT-D LEAs increases the likelihood of continued work on this plan in these districts and elsewhere across the nation because of their roll out plan to the additional 21 districts in the League.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	10

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The Digital Promise League has shown significant partnerships throughout the participating districts as well as in other areas across the nation. The desired results they identify are aligned with the previous sections of the application -- improved academic proficiency and growth, narrowing of achievement gaps, increased graduation and college-going rates, improved school learning environments and increased access to out-of-school supports for families. The digital infrastructure of this project will allow for tracking and reporting of these indicators. Data will be used to develop personalized plans for students and teachers designed to increase student achievement that evolve over time. The description of the partnering districts along with the participating district shows a clear model for scaling this approach. The application notes that additional support services for students and families will be a part of the personalized learning plans developed for each student. Community partners, school site coordinators and district staff will support teachers to build additional capacity to provide services to students. The continuous improvement efforts described earlier in this review are noted to include data collection and analysis, direct feedback from students and families, as well as a continuous improvement work group of the consortium. The performance measures chosen by the consortium in this section are input measures designed to track their progress toward the implementation of the project as well as more behavioral measures to complement the academic measures noted in the earlier section of the application.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The Consortium has presented a clear vision of using personalized learning environments to increase student achievement and improve overall outcomes for kids. With a thorough application that details the approach it would take to create these personalized learning environments for students, the work in seven districts across seven states while building on the four educational assurance areas. There is significant buy-in and support from all levels of government and the community in the seven local communities as well as other districts in the Digital Promise League and other organizations. They have shown the possibility for a successful implementation of their proposal and a clear and reasonable approach to scaling up the work.

Having the great variety of districts -- in size, geographic location, poverty levels and governance -- makes this project a good model for districts across the US to follow.

Total	210	193
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Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)

	Available	Score
Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)	15	12

Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments:

The request for additional funding in the optional budget would fund the expansion of the personalized learning environment projects to other schools within the Digital Promise League. The rationale provided builds on the plan presented in the main portion of the application; this money would go to support an expansion of the programs initiated under the RTT-D grant. Other than being members of the League, the rationale for selecting the specific schools is not addressed.

This proposal supports work across multiple LEAs as does the original application. The proposed budget, along with supplemental funds from other grants and the participating districts, would be sufficient to bring additional students into this program. The costs identified in the budget are reasonable with the exception of the gap analysis cost. A reasonable rate for the gap analysis would be lower than \$2000/ day for 16 days in each district.



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0758WA-2 for Vancouver Public Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The Consortium LEAs state that they are rising to meet educational challenges by understanding that technology offers a pathway to personalize learning, raise student aspirations and achievement, and rebuild and renew neighborhoods and communities. They further add that the RTT funds will make it possible for the seven districts to build on the state and local reform efforts and drive results for students.

Key features of the reform vision are

- Consortium sponsored professional development;
- a framework for and development of personalized student learning plans, including personalized support plans for high needs students;
- the use of common growth assessments;and
- projects that vary by school level with elementary, middle and high schools engaging in different age and grade appropriate approaches to personalize learning in a blended environment.

To provide flexibility and acknowledge distinctions, consortium members will be able to determine

- the best approach for adapting personalized learning models for elementary and secondary schools;
- how to use PLCs to develop turnkey training activities;
- digital content aligned to the CCSS; and
- how to enhance local data systems.

Applicants described seven strategic objectives for this application. Detailed descriptions of the personalized environments powered by technology were illustrated. Applicants described what the students and teacher would be doing; along with a description of the blended learning environment. For example, the learner will be engaged in a more consistent and personalized pedagogy that allows each student to work at his/her own pace. The Consortium stated that the results of the RTT research projects will be used to inform the development of teacher and principal practice (observation) rubrics that define effective implementation of personalized learning environments. Each Consortium LEA has committed to having an educator evaluation system in place by 2014-15. RTT funds will also be used to design, implement and refine a model of professional development in which all Consortium LEAs will participate and enrich their capacity to create personalized, data rich, and blended learning environments for students.

The applicants' comprehensive plan and supporting research described in this criterion demonstrate a coherent vision and clear approach for accelerating student achievement. The description of scaffolding from state RTT to local RTT and including a vision of enhanced digital connection and turnkey professional development supports personalized learning environments.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)

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(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The Consortium RTT planning team used a collaborative, data-driven process, such as the state accountability system and the proportion of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch to identify participating schools. They also targeted schools with large populations of students who have low academic performance levels and low-income status. The Consortium noted that in Year 1 more than half (59%) of the 27,536 participating students will be designated low-income, as measured by eligibility for free and reduced price lunch. Among the 42 participating schools, 37 have student populations in which 40% or more of students are low-income. Applicants included data illustrating student enrollment, number of high-need students, number of low-income families and participating educators in Table A2.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)

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(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The Consortium is committed to expanding their vision and working internally and externally to promote technology initiatives that benefit students and teachers in developing personalized learning in a blended academic environment. They further add that their plans for student learning reflect a substantial shift from the traditional model of education within which most educators are accustomed to working. All participating LEAs will participate in Digital Promise League of Innovative Schools sponsored research activities to advance knowledge in the field of teacher behaviors and skills related to effective teaching and learning in diverse learning environments.

The proposed scale up plan requires participating districts to engage in a set of activities designed to impact students. School based coaches will be experts in personalized and blended learning environments. They will receive 20 hours of professional development in a PLC format. Coaches will have all the necessary resources to assist school staff in creating PLEs, analyzing data to guide instruction, and implementing PLEs. The Consortium will provide a venue for an online community of learners. In addition, they will establish a virtual PLC to allow for ongoing support. A cloud based application will provide staff in each school access to a multitude of digital tools. Additional scale up initiatives include peer to peer conferences showcasing best practices, technology fairs, and district-wide principals conferences.

The Consortium not only focused on expanding the vision within their districts but to states throughout the country. The scale up implementation process will also be supported by the Digital Promise League of Innovative Schools. The samples of evidence provided above fully support this criterion.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)

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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The Consortium intends to provide high quality educational opportunities that prepare all students to graduate from high school and succeed in college and career. This is evident in the proposed four LEA-wide goals:

- Goal 1: Reduce proficiency gaps by half for all students and for each subgroup in each Consortium district
- Goal 2: Narrow achievement gaps by half for all students and for each subgroup in each Consortium district
- Goal 3: Increase the four year cohort graduation rate for all students, including high-need and low-income students, in

each Consortium district to at least 85%.

- Goal 4: Increase the college enrollment rate in each Consortium district by at least 5 percentage points.

Applicant provided the following supporting evidence

- State approved ESEA targets by LEA;
- Tables illustrating reading and math proficiency gap reduction targets by LEA for all subgroups. Each table in section A-4 is accompanied by a figure that graphically depicts the proficiency gap targets for one grade band in order to illustrate the proposed pattern of change;
- Tables illustrating reading and math achievement gap reduction targets by LEA for all subgroups;
- Table depicting four year graduation rate targets by LEA for all subgroups; and
- Table depicting college enrollment rate targets by LEA for all subgroups.

The preceding goals are ambitious and provide a frame work for achieving the vision. However, the Consortium will need to explain in-depth how they will increase academic performance for participating subgroups at schools with the largest achievement gaps before the RTT grant ends.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	13

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Each of the Consortium districts have demonstrated improved student outcomes earning them local and national recognition. For example, in 2011-12, Horry County Schools ranked first among high-poverty districts in South Carolina for math proficiency in grades 3, 5, 6, and 8 and for ELA proficiency in grades 4-8; and the Utica Community Schools in 2011 to 2012 had the highest graduation rate in its county and the highest AP exam rate in the state.

Additional supporting evidence included newspaper articles highlighting district success; interview protocol, matrix of student data systems, personalized graduation plans at four schools; online curriculum offered at four secondary schools; and credit recovery programs that provide personalized options for students who need nontraditional schedules.

The applicant also provided detailed student data to illustrate the academic success at each participating school. Vancouver Public Schools, the only LEA in the Consortium that had persistently low achieving schools, successfully turned around two persistently lowest -achieving middle schools using a community school model.

Data representing records of success for each participating district was thoroughly presented. For example, from 2006 to 2011, reading and math proficiency rates increased for all McAllen Independent School District student subgroups by 5-11 percentage points in reading and by 10 -20 percentage points in math. In addition, achievement gaps were reduced for low-income and ELL populations in reading and for all subgroups in math. A table illustrating the student achievement over time in each participating school supported this criterion. A systemic approach to personalized learning was implemented in the Opportunity Zone, a plan created for high poverty schools to adopt a community school model . Data were used to examine patterns of success and failure at the school, classroom, and student levels.

The Consortium provided a summary of data (Table B) that was accessible to students and parents and the mode of access. However, each participating school had only one or two modes of communication. The extent to which communication is inclusive of all families and representative of alternative modes was not thoroughly articulated.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	3
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<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Each LEA in the Consortium reported a high level of transparency in processes, practices, and investments at the district level; as illustrated in the table on page B-19. Additional supporting documents included school level expenditure reports for each Consortium member.</p> <p>Overall, the applicant has articulated a transparent process and a variety of pathways to publicize district and RTT information, but only one of the seven schools currently makes building level data available to the public.</p>		
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(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	8
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<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The Consortium has identified innovative blended learning models as the approach to developing personalized learning at the elementary, middle and high school levels. The Consortium members recognize that implementation of these models will require a different set of policy supports than currently exists. The Consortium noted that policies designed to promote educational excellence and equity in the traditional public school model can often impede the acceleration of blended learning models. Table B-3 illustrates the current state policies in each Consortium District that will support the implementation of personalized learning environments. The Consortium also provided brief summaries of each policy, as well as barriers to implementation. They identified existing state-based teacher certification requirements and state-wide investment in technological support as barriers but offered no resolutions.</p> <p>The Consortium has already focused attention on preparing students for success in college and careers. For example, several RTT Consortium states have enacted revised graduation requirements to ensure that more students are college and career ready.</p> <p>Additional supporting evidence for this criterion include State Flexible Spending Policy (Idaho), seat time waiver(Michigan Department of Education) and additional waivers from North Carolina State Department of Education and South Carolina Education Department, and removal of class size limits.</p>		
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(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>In this section, Consortium LEAs provided clear evidence of the processes utilized to engage key stakeholders in the RTT initiative. Each participating district initiated a series of stakeholder engagement strategies aimed at introducing the RTT opportunity. For example, several districts presented to and elicited feedback from stakeholders during board and cabinet meetings, including meetings of principals, superintendents, and support staff. Other districts used standing student meetings. For example, Joint School District No.2 discussed the grant during the fall Youth Leadership Council meeting; meetings were held with teachers at each participating school; surveys and focus groups were conducted; student focus groups convened at each participating school, and newsletter were distributed. With knowledge of their own communities each member LEA selected different means of soliciting feedback.</p> <p>The Consortium also garnered the support of national leaders in educational innovation and research. For example, the Urban Education Lab at the University of Chicago and the Education Innovation Laboratory at Harvard University voiced their support of the RTT proposal. The Executive Director of SHARE Vancouver, a non profit serving the homeless and hungry in poverty also agreed to support the RTT proposal. Additional businesses, organizations, and corporations supporting the RTT application are listed in section B4. Numerous letters of supports are documented in the appendix.</p> <p>The Consortium's impressive outreach yielded the following : widespread and full support from teachers within each member LEA, representing over 70% of teachers at each participating school; 232 letters from district based stakeholders-----43 principals, 24 parent-teacher organizations and student bodies, 113 parents; and a total of 135 letters of supports from local, county, and state educational authorities.</p>		
(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	5
<p>(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant reported that a preliminary gap analysis was conducted, primarily informed by a survey and interviews with superintendents from each participating district. Although there were a number of gaps identified to create personalized and blended learning environments, each LEA shared a number of innovative initiatives that were under way. These initiatives are illustrated in Table B5-1.</p> <p>The Consortium members used the findings from the gap analysis to determine the scope of their work and tools needed to support personalized learning. For example, they proposed to designate the first six months of the grant to engaging stakeholders in the following: understanding the requirements of the personalized learning and support projects in detail; becoming knowledgeable about what maps them to a technology deployment plan that rolls out the common use of digital content; the use of learning platforms, and reporting platforms. Additional evidence to support this criterion included district systems interview protocol; district data systems interview participants; and a district Personalized Learning Environment interview protocol.</p>		

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	20
(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:		

The Consortium LEAs are positioned to take the next step in changing the teaching and learning experience for all participants in their districts. As noted in section B1 of this application, the Consortium districts are in various stages of development in creating Personalized Learning Environments guided by blended learning. Some areas that will be common to all LEAs are personalized and blended learning coaches in each school, regular Measures of Academic Progress testing, professional development, personalized lesson plans, and project based learning for middle and high school students.

In this section, the applicant thoroughly delineates and articulates a high quality plan for improving teaching and learning. The elementary, middle and high school projects each reflect the varying approaches needed to institute personalized learning. Instructional supports and strategies will be provided to all participating students---in particular those high-need students in Consortium districts to--- successfully engage them in guiding the process of their own learning, meeting CCSS and remaining on a college-and career-ready track. For example, participating districts will pilot a personalized support plan component to be embedded in students' Personalized Learning Plans.

The Consortium emphasized that teachers will become facilitators in the classroom and students will be set free to design their own learning process. Students will be informed of their learning by using data to analyze where they are and what they need to focus on next. The Consortium districts will provide training for students to empower them to develop their own learning paths. For example, during student-led conferences, students will engage in conversation with their teachers and parents to plan for future content, remediation or expansion. In Horry County, all freshman and sophomores are required to schedule and facilitate a student-led conference at the end of the first semester. Participating middle schools will use a classroom rotation model to emphasize project based learning. Consortium districts will create intuitive dashboards and reports for teachers and administrators to support real time decision making and support personal learning profiles, digital content and other tools in order to maximize effective instructional time.

Additional supporting evidence included the following: Table of college and career ready standards, sample learner profile from Vancouver, 21st Century classroom program description from Joint School District No. 2, sample for earning college credit, Joint School District No. 2 virtual schoolhouse program description and sample student -led conference planning guide and instruction.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	18
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The Consortium states,"Not only are we redefining education in our schools, we are fundamentally altering what it means to be a great teacher." The preceding quote exemplifies the expectations and standards outlined in this section for all teachers in the participating LEAs. The Consortium also recognizes that it has not been successful in the past in creating a scale set of teaching professionals who are prepared for or comfortable creating personalized and blended learning environments. However, the processes and tools identified in this section will support personalized learning that will lead to all students meeting the requirements for graduation, and being college to career ready.

In this section, the Consortium applicants outline the processes for effective and sustainable professional development for teachers and administrators. The Consortium further added there will be training and resources for school leadership to effectively manage the transition to personalized and blended learning in their schools. For example, principals will participate in a specific set of activities designed to help them capitalize on their existing knowledge of personalized learning environments and blended classrooms; and also an expansion of the model.

The Consortium is committed to providing ongoing support for coaches, teachers, and leaders via an online community of learners and providers. A system to recognize professional mastery of content known as "badges" will be defined, readily available, and portable. In addition, participating LEAs will implement an aggressive teacher and principal evaluation system by the 2014-15 school year. A thorough explanation of how the teacher evaluation data will be used to identify effective and highly effective teachers and their role in implementing the RTT initiatives was not articulated. A New Teacher Observation Rubric will be implemented. This tool is intended to help new teachers refine their practice and inform professional learning plans but will not be linked to formal evaluation.

Additional supporting evidence included sample teacher skills in a digital environment rubric; sample teacher evaluation guidelines (South Carolina); a sample LoTi Digital Age Learning Assessment Report; sample PLC training materials from Washington State; and personalized and blended learning coach position description. A table illustrating strategic objectives, timelines and responsible parties was included in this section. Lastly, the Consortium reports that each Consortium superintendent is committed to providing each participating school the autonomy needed to implement the initiatives described in the RTT application.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	15
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The Consortium LEAs reported that the governance structure is designed to provide added value in key areas of strategic operations, support capacity building at district and school levels, identify and disseminate best practices in PLEs, and support economies of scale in procurement practices. Evident in this section are the structural components essential for the implementation and facilitation of personalized learning environments. Several visuals provide a clear description of the governance structure. For example, Figure D-1 illustrates the organizational structure of the Consortium; Figure D1-1 describes a summary of the Consortium Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), and Figure D2 illustrates the personalized learning infrastructure plan.</p> <p>The Consortium has also identified best teaching and learning practices for increasing the equity in education through enhancements to each schools' infrastructure. Moving toward a mastery-based system is a key factor in providing students with multiple means of achieving proficiency. The Consortium districts are committed to transitioning from a seat-time to a mastery-based approach to measuring students' academic progress. For example, Vancouver Public Schools revised its district policy to allow for the awarding of credit through demonstration of competency. They are also developing a process to identify which course would be eligible for competency-based credits. In addition, Horry County is exploring foreign language waivers.</p> <p>Each participating school is positioned to provide learning resources and practices that are accessible to all students. For example, personalized instruction for ELL at McAllen Independent School District have been charted and supported by qualified personnel; and Utica Community Schools have implemented a universal access design using iPads and other technologies to provide individualized learning plans for every kindergarten student in the district's 80 classes. They plan to scale up universal access in first grade and beyond. Vancouver Public Schools is piloting iPad technology integration for special education students with communication disorders. New ELL students also have access to iPads to increase their oral language skills. In addition, Mooresville Graded School District also provides iPads and apps to self-contained students and students with learning disabilities.</p> <p>Each participating superintendent has committed to providing participating schools with the autonomy and flexibility needed to introduce and scale personalized learning. Descriptions for key RTT grant personnel positions are located in the appendix.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	8
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The Consortium districts report making great strides in the last five years to build an exemplar digital infrastructure to support academic achievement. For example, online portals are available for families to access student progress. Educators will also be able to access data to inform instruction. In addition, a Enhancing Data Systems Project is in place to support development of data systems and provide the instructional tools, content, and learning approach best suited for each student. Figure D2 illustrates the proposed Personalized Learning Infrastructure Plan.</p> <p>The Consortium intends for every district to ensure stakeholder access to the components of the plan using products suited to their local context. For example, the participating LEAs will ensure that every participating student has a computer and internet connection in their home or community that provides access to the LCMS, Learner Profile, and personalized learning plans for themselves and their parents. However, the Consortium does not provide detailed implementation steps for obtaining and maintaining internet access in the homes of students.</p> <p>Also included in this section are descriptions of additional systems with a repository of information available for all teachers, parents, and students to access. The Consortium recognizes that data generated daily by learning activities must integrate with disparate stores of student data. Therefore, they have articulated a plan that allows for the selection and use of technology by the participating LEAs to be informed by knowledge of the current state of interoperability standards. For example, compliance with at least three set of standards will be critical for the deployment of the personalized infrastructure plan: one that applies to digital instructional content, one that applies to student information, and a third that applies to adaptive assessment content.</p>		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	15
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The Consortium identified six key steps in the continuous improvement process and described how each will promote the following: an iterative process for goal setting, testing models of Personalized Learning Environments and grant activities, collecting and sharing feedback and data on the quality of RTT investments, and conducting ongoing corrections to activities (E1). The continuous improvement process is defined as a highly iterative cyclical approach that is flexible and evolves as change occurs. It involves frequent feedback loops to provide real-time data that will be used to establish goals, inform instruction, and drive decision making. The Consortium also described their plans for developing and implementing strategies to engage stakeholders and communicate information and results from the continuous improvement process (E2). Each Consortium district will continue to engage a broad group of stakeholders beyond the grant period. For example, feedback on grant activities will be obtained from stakeholders in a timely, transparent, and sanction-free manner via virtual PLCs, forums, etc. Project goals were restated in this section.</p> <p>The Consortium will convene a RTT Continuous Improvement Working Group. The Consortium further added that all stakeholders, students, teachers, school administrators-----will incorporate ongoing reflection on personalized approaches to teaching and learning and will collect and use real-time data on program outcomes through data dashboards and student conferences. Overall, the Consortium has articulated an in-depth set of procedures to ensure continuous improvement for all aspect of the proposal.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Each Consortium will develop a comprehensive communication plan to reach a broad audience. The Digital Promise League of Innovative Schools will support this section of the proposal and collaborate with external evaluators to provide ongoing formative and summative evaluations. The Digital Promise League of Innovative Schools will be responsible for publicly sharing information about grant activities, challenges, and accomplishments. The RTT Program Director will assist participating schools with ongoing corrections to ensure that grant inputs produce outcomes needed to achieve the goals</p> <p>The Consortium restated the numerous activities that will be implemented to generate results that are used to inform them on effective models and help in adjusting and improving interventions. The participating districts will also collect feedback on grant activities in a timely, transparent, and sanction-free manner. Other forums for collecting feedback are School Leadership Team, PTO, data team meetings, as well as grant evaluation activities. Students will engage in examining classroom level data and provide reflection on personalized approaches to teaching and learning.</p> <p>Evident in this section is a comprehensive plan for communication and engagement that is integral to the articulation of the RTT to all stakeholders.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The Consortium selected schools with a low-income and academically high-needs population to participate in this proposal. A set of annual performance measures to assess the progress of each participating district in moving toward the goals and reform vision of the grant were developed to provide quantitative data on student learning and teacher practice outcomes. A rational for each measure explained how the Consortium would collect timely information to inform the continuous improvement process. Baseline data and annual targets for each performance were provided when available. The well designed plans for measuring the achievement levels of each subgroup was discussed in-depth in Section E.</p> <p>The Consortium districts have established ambitious, yet attainable goals and performance measures for the applicable student population targeted in this section. They emphasized that participating districts will benefit from a standardized approach that will provide common professional development and cross-district collaboration. For example, through different means, each participating district will be able to produce three sets of reports that combine a variety of student data: a learner profile for each student, a teacher dashboard to monitor student progress, and an administrator dashboard to monitor the</p>		

progress of groups of students, ensuring rigorous, timely and leading information. Tables illustrating the data to support this criterion are located in the appendix.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)

5

5

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

A descriptive process for ensuring an effective evaluation of the RTT funded activities was presented in this section. For example, conducting a competitive bidding process to select and engage external consultants; a process for continuous improvement that incorporates real-time data; feedback from stakeholders; rigorous research to test, refine; successful Personalized Learning Environment models and practices; and an adoption of evidence-based personalized and blended models. Baseline data and annual targets for performance measures are illustrated in Table 3E. A matrix of a complete set of evaluation questions that will frame the implementation, outcome, and return on investment studies and the methods that will be utilized to examine the questions is provided in Appendix E.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	10
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The Consortium LEAs are requesting a grant in the amount of \$40 million dollars to support seven districts and the Consortium as a whole achieve the project and LEA-wide student goals and performance measures that have been established. A detailed and comprehensive budget narrative and several Project-Level Budget Summary Tables presented in this section are reasonable and sufficient to support the budget request.</p> <p>The Consortium recognize that each district is at various stages. For example, some require substantial professional development and curriculum support, while others have major gaps in their data systems. The participating districts report that the RTT grant, along with a significant set of in-kind and non RTT resources will ensure that each participating district is designated the grant funds needed to supplement non RTT resources to support the RTT core projects. The Consortium provided a budget narrative for the nine RTT projects and one optional budget supplement. The itemized budgets are provided in the Excel worksheet attached to the application. In addition, the Consortium LEAs discussed how the Consortium-level budget, district-mandated budget, and district discretionary funds would be used. Identification of funds used for one time and ongoing costs are also illustrated in the Project-Level Itemized Cost Tables included in section F-1. In addition, a small centralized staff at the Consortium level will be hired to oversee the RTT implementation process.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	9
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The Consortium acknowledge that many of the LEA districts have substantial experience developing, funding, and sustaining initiatives similar to those in this grant. The Consortiums' multi- tiered plan for achieving sustainability of the personalized learning initiatives is included in section (F)(2). For example, the plan leverages the following resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • local, state, and Federal funding streams the participating districts will allocate to project activities, • public and private funds Digital Promise and the Digital Promise League of Innovative Schools have raised in support of Consortium goals, • an extensive network of experts, researchers, and entrepreneurs, and • The Consortium report that the RTT grant will be matched by contributions totaling 32,479,3331 dollars from the member districts to accomplish the board set of goals established in the application. They have identified their use of in-kind funding and nonmonetary resources from local, state, and federal sources. <p>The Consortium discussed leveraging resources for sustainability from Digital Promise and the Digital Promise League of</p>		

Innovative Schools. Given Digital Promise's support in a variety of sectors, the LEAs believe they will be able to leverage a wide range of external experts as advisors for implementing the proposed innovations. Digital Promise is expected to continue pursuing both fee-based and philanthropic funding for the League to sustain the work. They further add that there will be opportunities to fund research and other personalized learning activities through existing and pending federal structures, such as the National Science Foundation's Directorates for Education and Human Resources, and Computer and Information Science and Engineering. Not included in this section is how each participating district will address the sustainability of hardware usage after RTT funding. The Consortium provided a list of strategic partners and their specialty, letters of support from politicians representing the participating LEAs, and State Education Department letters of support.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	10

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

Each Consortium district has committed to pilot, refine, and scale up personalized learning support plans with RTT funding. Monies will also be used to develop the data infrastructure required to support these plans by enabling partner organizations to provide participating LEAs with student level outcome data. The participating districts report that they currently maintain sustainable partnerships with many public and private organizations committed to addressing the socio-emotional, behavioral, and basic needs of students and their families.

The Consortium further added that their goal is to help participating LEAs select and strengthen partnerships that will mitigate the personal barriers preventing students from actively engaging in the personalized learning environments proposed. For example, they have selected a typology structure (basic needs, social and emotional well-being---including students' prosocial behaviors, physical health and wellness, parent services) that is representative of their student support plans that will be used to select community partners. Participating LEAs stated that their model will enhance the ability of partners to augment school services in five areas.The Consortium designed a thorough and collaborative plan for all partners and service providers that define clear protocols for all. For example, the participating districts intend to ensure that participating schools and partners are equipped to share data while preserving individual confidentiality and compliance with FERPA.

The Consortium identified the population-level to be served as all students,including high-need students who will demonstrate improved academic proficiency and growth. They continued by stating that the achievement gaps of low-income and high-need students will be reduced and the graduation rate of all students increase. Participating districts intend to provide the digital infrastructure needed to capture the nonacademic outcomes for each student. Selected indicators will be measured consistently at the students' level. Personalized student support plans will be created in a collaborative process with guidelines, templates informed by best practices and consistent across schools and districts. Students will be involved in the development of their plans.The personalized plans will be age-dependent and tiered by the immediacy of the students' need and kept current. These plans will be managed in each school by a Student-Support Coordinator. Three districts will initially pilot the personalized support plan model in the first year. Training for staff will occur in the first year, and ongoing thereafter. The participating LEAs plan to expand the pilot in subsequent years to all schools.

Participating LEAs state that their specific approach to capacity building will entail technical assistance provided to three constituencies: community partners, school-site coordinators, and district staff. A detailed plan for technical support, by year and aligned to budget allocation for this criterion is located in the appendix.

To measure the performance of the initiatives for the Competitive Preference Priority, the Consortium identified five performance measures that provide quantitative indicators that can be used to determine the successes and areas of improvement in program implementation. A rationale for each performance measure was provided. For example, Performance Measure 1: Personalized support plans will be developed collaboratively by students, teachers, and parents/family members for 50% of targeted students by spring 2012, for 75% by spring 2015, and for 90% by spring 2016.

Absolute Priority 1

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	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

As described in each comment section of this application the Consortium districts have coherently and comprehensively articulated a vision comprised of attainable goals for creating and sustaining personalized learning environments for high need and low-income students, thus closing the academic and socio-economic gaps that prevent success. They have proficiently described in the applicable sections the strategies, tools, and supports for students and educators that are aligned to college- and career readiness, as detailed in the elementary, middle and high school projects. Formalized and engaging RTT project plans, inclusive of all stakeholders were detailed and aligned to a feasible budget proposal.

The Consortium Districts proposed and outlined specific professional development trainings for teachers and students in the development of the personalized learning plans. Supports and structures for implementation and sustaining the RTT initiatives were clear and concise. Partnerships and protocols for collaborations were defined with the focus on maintaining integrity and confidentiality. The Consortium leaders state that the RTT initiatives will focus on helping district staff understand best practices in creating and implementing personalized student support plans, and will provide tools for district leaders to use in assessing current school and community resources that can be better aligned to school improvement goals.

The Consortium LEAs articulated the vision through the following project goals:

1. Implement instructional technology to transform traditional classrooms into state-of-the-art blended and personalized learning environments for all students in grades K-12.
2. Pilot, refine, and scale a model of personalized nonacademic support plans for high need students in grades K-12 to enable them to accomplish their personalized learning plan.
3. Build the capacity of teachers, principals, and district leaders in each participating district to design, implement, scale, and sustain K-12 personalized learning environments beyond the four -year funding cycle.

Total	210	198
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Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)

	Available	Score
Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)	15	13

Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments:

The Consortium LEAs provided the following supporting statements: " In years 2-4 of the RTT grant period, the optional budget supplement funding would be used to launch the process of bringing the elementary, middle and high school personalized learning environment projects and their underlying support structures (e.g.. data systems enhancements capacity building strategies, policy changes) to scale. In addition, during each of the three years of the project, one cohort of seven participating districts will be introduced to the deliverables and best practices emanating from the seven "testbed" districts through a series of needs assessment, knowledge sharing and training activities funded by the budget supplement and in-kind resources provided by the Digital Promise League of Innovative Schools."

The Consortium indicated that the RTT proposal represents a unique opportunity for districts with proven track records in the use of education technology to expand on successful local technology initiatives so that more students benefit from personalized learning in a blended learning environment. The Consortium districts will use the participating schools in the RTT grant as laboratories for developing, implementing, and sharing knowledge about effective strategies for personalized learning environments. It is expected that the RTT initiative will be scaled up to serve 65 schools by the final year of the grant, representing 30% of the schools across the Consortium districts. The projected number of participating schools by LEA and by grant year is shown in Table (A)(3). Knowledge sharing within and between each LEA will be a key component of the scale up needed to spread the key resources and understanding of creating personalized and blended learning environments throughout each participating district. Personalized and Blended Learning Coaches will play a vital role in scaling up professional development for district educators. Superintendents and school leaders will also participate in professional development.

Overall, the Consortium intends to use the Optional Budget Supplement funds to complete projects at the elementary, middle and high school levels. They did not mention using the Optional Budget Supplement funds to implement activities outlined in the preceding paragraph. Therefore, it is assumed that scale up initiatives within each Consortium district will not need funds from the Optional Budget Supplement.



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0758WA-3 for Vancouver Public Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's proposal is driven by a comprehensive vision for reforming the educational experience for over 25,000 students. The proposal stems logically from the mission of the public-private partnership that formed the League of Innovative Schools to become leaders in the use of technology to change teaching and learning in order to improve student achievement. The applicant's focus on the expansion of smart, proven strategies for implementing and scaling up the use of technology to create personalized learning environments seems tailor made for the League and the work it has been doing to advance the use of technology as a lever for more personalized instruction and improved academic achievement for students from all backgrounds and learning styles. Although the applicant's vision is weighty and complex in its structure, the core goals integrate the four assurance areas and present a reasonable approach to meeting the need for increased academic achievement, deeper student learning and increased equity. The proposal contains ample evidence of the coherence and consistency of vision that will be needed to implement a proposal of this scale:

- the applicant appears to have established concrete relationships with players in different sectors -- public and private, entrepreneurial, non-profit and government -- that all share a common commitment to identifying proven best practices, removing barriers to access to technologies for participants, expanding the number of students who are educated in a quality personalized learning environment and then sharing the knowledge gained from the enterprise with others so they can replicate
- the applicant's vision has already gained traction with a wide range of supporters based on work accomplished to date to further the applicant's goals and appears viable even without RTT grant funds
- the applicant describes multiple, concrete projects, each of which build upon one another to fulfill the overall vision:
 - the creation of personalized learning environments forms the core of the work to be done and ensures that the rest of the plan is built upon a strong foundation;
 - the personalized support plans address the non-academic barriers that often stand in the way of a successful instructional strategy;
 - the professional development component that includes teachers and administrators provides a critical piece for effective implementation and scaling up the innovations, as it ensures the educators on the ground have access to feedback, support and important data that will enable them to adjust their practices as necessary;
 - the enhanced data systems again provide an important component to ensure effective implementation at all levels. In particular, the Consortium Digital Learning Platform is potentially, a very powerful tool to leverage

- the lessons learned in one school to other participants;
- o the continuous improvement cycles will be run across the levels of participants and critically, includes external partners who can provide more objective feedback;
- o the plan for dissemination of best practices increases the likelihood that the ambitious goals set regarding the scope of students impacted by the project can be realized.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)

10

8

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's plan is complex and multi-layered, but presents a reasonable and sound approach to implementing such a comprehensive and wide-reaching proposal. The applicant provides evidence of a strong commitment to implement the plan by participating districts and their superintendents (as seen in the MOU, agreement to establishment of goals and letters of support). However, effective implementation at the school level appears to be highly dependent upon the ability of school level coaches to bring about change and the superintendent's ability to ensure adherence to the goals and strategies for creating a personalized learning environment for each student. In contrast to other areas of the proposal, the applicant's description of the selection process used to identify participating districts and schools is lacking in detail. Although the applicant offers a general description of the overall process used (a planning team worked with superintendents to analyze data), there is insufficient information provided about how final decisions were made or whether there was a specific formula used to finalize the list of participants. The list of participating districts and schools demonstrates that there is a fairly diverse group of students who will be served by the applicant, but what remains unclear is which students within the participating districts and schools will not be served directly. Concerns regarding this lack of detail, however, are less relevant when the plans for scaling up the innovations are considered. The applicant has an aggressive plan to expand the projects to serve additional students within each participating district and the League.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)

10

10

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Despite a wide-ranging and ambitious goal of improving the academic achievement of over 25,000 students through its personalized learning strategies, the applicant sets forth a well-thought out plan for taking the project from 7 school districts and 42 schools to serving 65 schools directly. The plan, if properly executed, should lead to substantive reform in schools across several districts. Starting with the overall goal of providing personalized learning environments and learning plans for each student in the 42 participating schools, the applicant explains how each year, new schools will become participants and receive the benefits of other participating schools. The applicant provides a detailed description of the different project goals, specific activities, deliverables and general timeline for accomplishing each. Even though a lot of responsibility for sharing information and working with other schools is placed on school level coaches, overall the plan for adding schools is reasonable.

Concerns for effective implementation are addressed by using school based coaches as the main building blocks for expansion of services to other schools. The applicant's theory of change relies heavily on leveraging resources from the district, the other Consortium districts and the League via the school based coaches. School based coaches will be able to work with teachers and administrators at other schools in the district and teach them about creating personalized learning environments. In addition:

- coaches will meet as part of a district level professional learning community to share best practices and strategies for improving implementation
- the applicant will develop a virtual professional learning community that will enable coaches across districts to learn from one another and share best practices, lessons and blended learning content
- open source digital content will be made available to each district through an innovative cloud based application
- non-participating League districts will be able to benefit as a "learning district" by partnering with a participating district to learn about the development of personalized learning environments
- the League will further efforts to scale up the innovations that prove successful by sharing strategies with other educators through sponsorship of structured League activities and events, creation of a professional learning academy for superintendents and school leaders who want to develop blended learning models and wide dissemination of data, research findings and best practices by League supporters.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)

10

9

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The LEA-wide and consortium wide goals are ambitious, yet appear to be achievable given (1) the substantial resources that

will be dedicated to each school, (2) the apparent commitment to implementation by superintendents and other supporters of the project and (3) the planned continuous improvement cycles that will be conducted throughout the life of the project. The applicant includes concrete goals for each district that relate to proficiency and growth on summative assessments, narrowing the achievement gap between the lowest and highest achieving students and increasing graduation and college enrollment rates. The applicant's approach to goal setting ensures a commitment to improve basic levels of performance for all students and those high need students in subgroups. By focusing on goals that will reduce the gap between 100% proficiency and actual scores, the applicant addresses the need for consistent growth over four years as well. The achievement gap goals are appropriately framed to reduce the gap between the highest and lowest achieving subgroups, rather than focusing on the gap between white students or all students and the other subgroups. The applicant demonstrates that if implemented effectively, the personalized learning strategies they use will significantly narrow the achievement gaps across all districts within the consortium. Additionally, some of the school districts are already high achieving, yet the applicant sets reasonable goals for those districts too by requiring them to maintain achievement, graduation rates and college enrollment at high levels. The assessments that applicant proposes each district use as the basis for measuring the extent to which each goal is met are generally acceptable, state specific assessments. However, in a few instances, the district has elected to use "end of course" exams for ELA or reading and math proficiency goals in high school grades. Use of end of course exam grades instead of statewide assessments raises questions about the standard the applicant will use to determine proficiency and whether that standard is the same across schools within the district and across districts. Further, the fact that statewide assessment data will be used to evaluate achievement gap goals suggests that statewide assessment data is available for high schools, but the applicant provides no explanation for why it has chosen not to use those statewide assessments to assess proficiency and growth for high school students.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	14
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant set forth the academic record for each of the participating districts and each showed relatively high levels of proficiency in math and ELA on statewide assessments, growth in multiple subject areas over time and improved achievement among different student subgroups. In most cases, the academic progress demonstrated tracks the time period that the district has adopted and implemented personalized learning strategies. The district that appears to have experienced the most dramatic improvement has adopted all five instructional improvement and support strategies the applicant identified. Critically, the applicant provided more than one year's achievement data for each district. Instead, the applicant provided evidence that the majority of districts have seen consistent improvement in outcomes over time and in the most recent years. There was at least one of the participating districts that experienced marked performance drops in 2010 and therefore did not have continuous improvement over time. However, even that district has begun to reverse the trend and has seen improved performance since 2010.</p> <p>Additionally, each district has already implemented reforms that are aligned with the project goals of creating personalized learning environments and plans and fostering college and career readiness. The majority of districts have already begun developing a personalized learning environment for some students through 1:1 digital learning initiatives and each district has adopted initiatives aimed at providing early college opportunities.</p> <p>Each district has already demonstrated its commitment to make student performance data available to students, parents and educators and has initiatives in place designed to enable all stakeholders to use that data to inform instruction and provide useful information about student progress. The goal to have each district use a learning content management system is ambitious. The applicant acknowledges it will be a challenge to ensure that each district's system meets the consortium's reporting standards but also allows the district to make an independent decision as to what type of content system works best for its schools. The District Learning Platform will be a powerful tool, should the districts decide to utilize it. The plan is somewhat weakened by the applicant's lack of commitment to use of the Digital Learning Platform across all participating districts.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	3
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The participating districts currently have processes and practices that are transparent and that enable the public to understand how the districts invest public dollars. Each participating school district in the consortium currently collects information</p>		

regarding school level expenditures required by the grant notice. However, only one district makes the school level data available publicly. The rest of the districts collect data at the school level, but only make the information available publicly at the district level. All districts have entered into a memorandum of understanding memorializing their commitment to collect and report publicly school level data on expenditures of the type set forth in the notice. The applicant fails to include any discussion regarding an independent commitment to transparency of consortium, district practices or processes other than its commitment to comply with grant guidelines on reporting.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)

10

8

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's description of the regulatory environment for participating districts suggests that they are all located in states that have made progress in removing legal and policy barriers to innovation through personalized learning strategies. The applicant has demonstrated that in five key policy areas, the regulatory environment is positive in the states where participating districts are located. The applicant indicates that five of seven districts are held accountable to graduation requirements that favor college and career ready standards. The majority of districts have programs that allow students to obtain credit for college while still in high school and have adopted seat-time waiver laws and flexible class size limits that enable districts to remove two of the principal barriers to implementation of a blended learning environment.

The applicant has identified two of the potential barriers to implementation: (1) existing state-based teacher certification requirements and (2) statewide investment in technological infrastructure. However, the applicant fails to include a detailed plan or proposal aimed at addressing the issues and ensuring that participating schools will have access to all forms of digital learning. Furthermore, the applicant does not provide any information regarding the extent to which each state has established the technological infrastructure that will be necessary for effective implementation of the applicant's plans.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)

10

10

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant described a comprehensive process that the applicant used to engage key stakeholders, including parents, students, teachers and school level administrators, public officials and community members. The process centered around the participating districts and involved the identification of challenges attendant to implementation of the various projects and development of solutions and pathways to address those challenges. The multi-layered process succeeded in securing a deep level of support from stakeholders. Each district tailored its engagement process to fit the needs of stakeholders within its community. The applicant included overwhelming evidence of that support from stakeholders at every level, even parents and students who will be served in participating schools. The commitment of direct participants is memorialized in a thoughtful memorandum of understanding. Also, it is clear that the application benefited from input the applicant received from numerous national experts who are engaged in the work of developing tools and services that participating districts will need to implement personalized learning environments and plans.

As part of the engagement process, the applicant secured the support of over 70% of the teachers at each participating school. Additionally, the applicant was able to obtain the signature of the teachers' union representative from each district. The high level of support from teachers will be critical to the effective implementation of the applicant's ambitious, yet achievable plans to develop personalized learning environments and plans for each student.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)

5

4

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant conducted a thorough needs and gap analysis and has prepared a sound plan to address the various challenges that each participating district may face as they work to implement the applicant's ambitious projects. Although the applicant did not provide evidence of a plan with specific goals, deliverables, timelines and allocation of responsibilities, it presented a detailed plan to address five potential areas of need that if ignored could prevent the effective implementation of the various projects. The applicant demonstrated that it conducted a preliminary gap analysis by conducting a survey and interviews of superintendents from the participating districts. By doing so, the applicant created a solid foundation of information as to what each district will need to fully implement the various proposed projects.

The applicant was able to confirm that each district has a number of initiatives under way that will make it easier to develop comprehensive personalized learning environments. However, the applicant also uncovered the extent to which each district would need additional assistance with regard to five specific areas: (1) Personalized digital content; (2) Formative benchmark/assessments; (3) Data systems/dashboards; (4) Common planning and professional development and (5) School-level support. The areas of need identified are precisely the types of issues that can hamstring efforts to implement personalized learning strategies. If a district is unprepared to work with personalized digital content, transition to blended

learning environments will be a serious challenge. Similarly, a school without experience using formative benchmarks and assessments or using data systems and dashboards will need time and resources to develop the appropriate systems and learn how to use them. Districts that do not have an infrastructure that includes common planning time and professional development and other school-level supports will also have to put those components in place before the ambitious projects can be implemented.

Applicant's plan to address gaps relies heavily on sharing of best practices among participating districts, additional professional development and consulting with experts. Additionally, the applicant intends to spend the first six months of the grant period to implement additional needs analysis and make necessary improvements. Given the relatively wide variety of needs identified as part of the initial gap analysis, a more detailed plan, with specific goals, deliverables and critically, identification of responsible parties should be developed.

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	20
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has provided a high-quality plan for engaging all students in each participating district through the use of innovative personalized learning environments and supported by locally driven personalized learning and support plans for each student. College and career readiness standards have been reviewed and the goal of enabling students to meet those standards has been incorporated into the plan. The approach is extraordinarily ambitious, but appears to be supported by an extensive network of resources and expertise and a plan to engage in continuous improvement efforts to make sure no district, school or student is left behind. The common elements applicant has included for all districts (personalized and blended learning coaches, MAP testing, consortium sponsored professional development, personalized learning and support plans and project based learning) will be important components to successful implementation at the school level. Furthermore, the applicant is taking a consistent and rigorous approach to college and career readiness. The plan involves preparing students to master core content, but also to acquire the non-academic skills such as collaboration, critical thinking, goal setting and planning that are essential to success in college and beyond. The focus on literacy and numeracy in elementary school, increased project based learning in middle school and independent, readiness driven learning in high school is appropriately age based and student centered. The plan also leverages the blended learning environment to ensure that students will have access to a diverse mix of materials, students and educators. The personalized support plans the applicant intends to develop, if backed with sufficient resources to provide high-need students with additional help, should result in improved outcomes for those students.</p>		
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	18
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant's plan to ensure that educators have the knowledge, skills and capacity to help students succeed academically and be prepared for college and career is wide-ranging and ambitious. The goals are achievable but will require substantial resources and faithful implementation of the specific plans at the consortium, district and school level. Further, the applicant does not provide specific details on who will be available to provide the necessary professional development that is such a critical component to effective implementation. Overall, however, the applicant has presented a well-developed plan that reaches every level of educator (consortium directors, superintendents, principals and teachers) that will be involved in the delivery of instruction to participating students.</p> <p>The applicant intends to provide teachers and principals at the school level with the essential resources they will need: (1) ongoing professional development that delivers training on the best strategies for personalized and blended learning and that gives them tools to evaluate their instructional practices and make necessary improvements; (2) access to professional learning communities (virtual and local) that will serve as expert resources, sounding boards and critical friends for educators; and (3) pathways to professional and career development via the badge system. The personalized learning coaches at each school will play a vital role and the professional development the coaches receive will appropriately be continuous throughout implementation of the project. Additionally, the applicant will require principals to be actively involved in the personalized and blended learning PLCs and will provide principals with extensive support through the Principal's Academy to help them make data driven decisions. The applicant also demonstrates a commitment to development of reliable tools for evaluating teachers in a personalized learning environment. The majority of districts already have some evaluation process in place, but the participating districts have committed to adopt a more formal process by 2014-15. The plan to bridge the gap between the</p>		

data available to teachers and their ability to use the information effectively to tailor instruction is sound. Outside of development of an appropriate evaluation tool, however, the applicant does not provide specific detail on how it will ensure more students are taught by effective and highly-effective teachers. In addition, the pilot program for a professional practice rubric is not expanded to other schools during the grant period.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	13
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has developed a sophisticated organizational structure and high quality plan to manage the complex network of districts, partners and stakeholders that will implement the overall plan. The governing board comprised of the seven district superintendents is empowered to make the decisions necessary to oversee and manage implementation. Moreover, the addition of the Sustainability Working Group, Data Systems Working Group and Continuous Working Group as key consultants and partners is a smart way to organize the many different moving parts and to take advantage of the extensive relationships applicant has developed and the strong support from external partners with resources. Although the composition of the Continuous Improvement Working Group is generally described, the application is missing a similar description of the contemplated membership of the other two working groups. Additionally, the administrative structure at the consortium and district level appear to be reasonable responses to the need to have a team available for day to day management of the project and holding various players accountable. The application does not, however, adequately address how the school level personalized learning coaches will be supported within the district given the significant role the coaches will play in implementation.</p> <p>The governing structure is held together by a clear and binding memorandum of understanding (MOU) that each district has signed and that obligates each district to implement the plans set forth in the proposal and follow all grant requirements. The MOU is signed by the major stakeholder groups at the district level. The organizational framework relies heavily on the superintendent to ensure that each school has sufficient flexibility and resources to meet its obligations. The applicant does not mention the role that the local board of education plays in decision making or in the hiring and retention of the superintendents that will be responsible to serve on the consortium's governing body and to bear the lion's share of the responsibility for satisfying district level obligations. Nor does the applicant identify the third party fiscal agent who will work with the lead district to administer the grant funds. Although the applicant describes the process that will be used to retain a fiscal agent, the application lacks a discussion of the balance of responsibilities between the district and the outside fiscal agent or how the agent will be held accountable. Nonetheless, the participating districts and schools have been provided the necessary supports and autonomy and appear to have access to resources that will enable them to effectively implement the applicant's plans.</p> <p>The applicant provided evidence that district rules and policies will not likely present a barrier to implementation of a system that promotes mastery of subject matter over seat time requirements. Further, the applicant has shown that the districts are prepared to ensure that students with disabilities and English language learners will have access to all the innovations that will be developed for students in participating districts.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	8
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant appears to be fully prepared to support personalized learning for every student. Each district has established a digital infrastructure and culture that already enables schools to provide students and families with online portals to share data and information on student progress and fosters data driven instructional practices. With the Data Systems Project, the applicant will provide schools a set of products and services especially designed to support personalized learning. The project will include (1) individualized student goals as part of the electronically stored, personalized learning plans, (2) a content management system that provides educators a library of resources to aid instruction and (3) student data reports like the individual student learning profiles and dashboards. Critically, the applicant obligates each district to give stakeholders access to the different data systems. This will ensure transparency and aid continuous improvement and family engagement. All students will have access to a computer and high quality Internet connection in their home or community. To meet this requirement, a number of districts will merely need to expand existing programs that already offer their students computers or tablets, free of charge or at a low cost. The applicant's decision not to require participating districts to purchase the consortium sponsored Digital Learning Platform is a potential weakness of the overall plan in that the applicant will have to contend with technical assistance needs that may vary across districts and with problems raised by lack of interoperability of</p>		

data systems.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	15
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has demonstrated that it has an exhaustive continuous improvement process that involves the repeated collection of data, review of real time evidence of program outcomes and use of the evidence on program outcomes to inform ongoing adjustment and improvement of program activities and goals. The continuous improvement process described in the application will involve stakeholders at all levels, including external partners, students, parents and local level educators. The process will be guided by a six steps: goal setting, implementation and testing models of PLEs and grant activities, collection of information and sharing feedback, measuring and monitoring quality of investments, planning and implementing strategies to engage stakeholders and communicate information and results from continuous improvement process and then conducting ongoing corrections to activities. The entire system will be overseen by a continuous improvement working group. The working group will be comprised of expert consultants and important representatives from the governing board and districts. Even the continuous improvement process will be subject to continuous improvement efforts. The establishment of a working group exclusively focused on the task of continuous improvement provides strong evidence that the applicant is committed to ensuring that project activities are guided by a solid understanding of best practices and student and educator needs at the district and school level.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has presented a sound set of strategies for communicating and continuing to engage the various internal and external stakeholders involved. The applicant evidenced an ability engage stakeholders during its development of the grant proposal by submitting numerous letters of support from those who will be directly impacted by implementation of the applicant's plan -- district representatives, school based educators, students, parents and local public officials -- as well as external stakeholders at the national, state and local level who will serve as the applicant's partners and supporters throughout implementation of the plans. The application includes a detailed description of the ways applicant intends to build upon the support it obtained in the proposal process and to continue to engage stakeholders and educate the public. Additionally, the RTT Program Director is designated to help ensure effective implementation and coordination of the ongoing communication and engagement work.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	4
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has developed a number of ambitious, yet achievable performance measures that reflect the priorities established in the application for making substantial improvements in academic proficiency for all students and preparing students for college and career by teaching them noncognitive skills that will be important for long term success. The applicant has set performance measures designed to track progress in several important areas: (1) number of students taught by highly effective and effective teachers and principals; (2) academic growth as measured by MAP assessments; (3) mastery on noncognitive indicators that are essential for success in college and career; (4) mastery of college and career readiness standards as measured by statewide assessments; (5) number of students eligible to obtain college credits while in high school; (6) number of students participating in early career opportunities like internships; and (7) number of students who complete financial aid applications. On each measure, the applicant includes relatively ambitious goals for all students and critical subgroups. Additionally, the rationale the applicant has presented for using each measure is sound.</p> <p>The applicant indicates that the League and not the continuous improvement working group will review targets for all of the performance measures once the baseline data is collected. Yet the members of the continuous improvement working group are responsible for oversight of the continuous improvement process and will likely be in a strong position to provide data and information that will be necessary to make informed decisions about whether performance measures should be adjusted. The application lacks any discussion of how the League and the working group will collaborate to make decisions about which performance goals will truly be achievable and whether performance measures, upon review, should be modified.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	5

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

In addition to developing a rigorous continuous improvement process, the applicant intends to engage outside consultants to design and conduct an evaluation of all program activities, assess the impact the projects have had on participants and determine whether the applicant is meeting the goals and performance measures as set forth in its proposal. The planned evaluation will be comprehensive as it will include studies on implementation, outcomes and return on investment. The set of evaluation questions that the applicant will use to frame the studies are sound, concrete research questions that should form the basis of a high quality evaluation.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	10
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant's budget is comprehensive and transparent as to the funds that will be necessary to implement the overall plan, both those requested under the grant and those that the applicant expects to raise from other sources. The applicant has clearly delineated one-time versus operational costs and has identified a number of the post-grant costs it expects to incur as well. The budget narrative is provided by project (overall and itemized) and the applicant has included a level-based breakdown of the budget. Based on the expansive scope of the project, the complexity of the overall plan and ambitious goals, the budget is reasonable. The majority of funds are directed at district level activities designed to ensure development of a personalized learning environment for all participating students. Although the sums requested are substantial, the applicant provides a sound explanation for each expenditure.</p> <p>Additionally, the applicant has secured a substantial amount of funds from other sources to support its work to date and to supplement any grant funds. The commitment of dollars from outside sources evidences widespread support for the goals of the project. The applicant has secured a commitment from the districts to absorb some of the costs that will be incurred at the end of the grant period and will be leveraging resources from outside sources to ensure long-term sustainability of personalized learning environments and related supports developed during the grant period.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	10
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The driving force behind the applicant's proposal, the League, was formed prior to the announcement of the RTT grant competition. The League has long planned to implement a plan for scaling up the development of high quality personalized and blended learning environments in schools. The applicant's proposal appears to be in strong alignment with the League's mission. Therefore, the extensive support evidenced for the League's work should ensure that the progress made in participating districts will continue to be supported. The applicant provided high quality plans that it expects not only to sustain the work done in participating districts, but to expand it. The Sustainability Working Group that will be created will oversee the applicant's expansion goals and work to secure the additional resources that will be necessary to meet those goals. The plan includes support from a variety of sources including: (1) ongoing funding from local, state and federal governmental bodies; (2) private dollars allocated to Digital Promise and the League and (3) in kind services and donations from experts, researchers, community organizations and entrepreneurs who support the plan.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	10
<p>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant's plan to develop personalized support plans for each participating student is a critical component of its overall plan to develop effective personalized learning environments. The applicant has developed plans to enable participating districts to better leverage existing relationships with outside service providers and remove barriers to learning. The applicant has identified a number of existing partnerships that districts maintain with various community organizations and local service providers and it sets forth a reasonable plan to increase the capacity those groups have to work with participating students. The partner service providers will be empowered to contribute student level data to the student's profile and to obtain access</p>		

to personalized learning and support plans and other information about the students being served. The active involvement of a student's entire service team is a potentially very efficient and powerful way to address student learning needs and provide students with the supports they need to improve academically. The applicant has identified concrete results it expects to see if the personalized support plans can be implemented effectively and partner service providers effectively brought into the process. Most of the predicted results duplicate other outcomes the applicant has identified in other portions of its proposal. However, the performance measures the applicant proposes are ambitious and target some of the most important indicators that pose challenges for high need students. Given the level of support students will receive based on a personalized support plan designed by all relevant stakeholders and known to each student's service providers, the performance goals are achievable.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has developed a comprehensive and very ambitious plan that has the potential to expand the use of personalized learning environments and support plans significantly. Each component of the proposal is aligned with the applicant's overall mission and set of specific goals. It builds on each core educational assurance area as evidenced by the following: (1) each participating district is committed to making academic improvements in ways that ensure students can meet college and career readiness standards; (2) the applicant has developed a specific project that is dedicated to creation of data systems that will support personalized and blended learning environments and facilitate student growth and increased proficiency; (3) the plan dedicates real resources to building knowledge of what it means to be an effective educator in a personalized learning environment and to increase participating students' access to those educators and (4) the participating districts operate some of their state's lowest achieving schools and the applicant includes goals and plans to improve academic outcomes for the high need students dramatically in each district. The application contains extensive details about how the districts will use grant funds to accelerate and expand personalized and blended learning initiatives for all participating students and how the individualized learning opportunities will facilitate deeper understanding of core content and lead to improved academic outcomes and decreased achievement gaps. The achievement of these goals will result in higher graduation rates and students being sent to college and jobs with the tools they need to succeed. Furthermore, the applicant has extensive support of educators and experts who have experience creating personalized learning environments and it has already obtained a substantial portion of the resources it will need to ensure faithful implementation and sustainability of its plans.

Total	210	194
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Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)

	Available	Score
Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)	15	11

Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments:

The applicant is seeking an additional \$1.99 million to support its scaling up efforts that would bring personalized learning environments to 21 additional districts during the grant period. The project is separate and failure to implement it would not adversely affect the applicant's ability to implement its proposal or to meet Absolute Priority 1. The districts that would be beneficiaries of the funding are already participants in the League, and therefore, have already demonstrated some readiness to implement and support the creation of personalized learning environments in schools. The plan to expand the project to these "learning districts" is reasonable, but lacks sufficient detail as to how exposure to training and the provision of consulting services to conduct a needs assessment will ultimately enable these districts to create effective personalized learning environments. Additionally, the applicant does not provide information as to what the final deliverables would be or who within the organizational structure of the Consortium would be responsible for carrying out the various tasks associated with identifying the schedule for district participation, retaining and overseeing consultants, establishing performance goals and holding districts accountable for performance.

